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*"HOLY NIGHT"*  
By Correggio

—Courtesy Art Institute



"SPRING"  
By Botticelli

—Courtesy Art Institute

## Puzzles and Mysteries in Art

By JAMES WILLIAM PATTISON

THE exercise of curiosity brings many exciting experiences. That which we would like to know but can't quite find out, quickens the heart's action and excites the nerves. Some people get angry because either Nature or art produces puzzles which undo us. As Nature attends to her own affairs, without asking our permission, we know the uselessness of quarreling with her. It is upon art and artists that the peevishness is expended. So the opposition is happy in having something to scold about.

To others, working out puzzles is cause for rejoicing; it being a real luxury—the fruition of curiosity's activity. That which is plainly to be seen and easily understood, may excite admiration because of its

beauty, but, before long palls on the senses, unless of mighty importance. "The Sistine Madonna," by Raphael, or "The David" of Angelo maintain a hold upon us because so great. Neither of these great works entirely escapes from the list of those involved in mystery. How did Raphael secure the divine expressions of his Madonna and Child, and why could not other painters equal Raphael? This question suggests one of the actual attractions of this picture. Did we comprehend the secret of its power, half the charm were lost. Those of us who talk and write about art are repeatedly staggered by the enquirer's question, "Why is it great?" In attempting to discover the cause of the picture's greatness, the beauty grows more beautiful, as the



"PIAZZA SAN MARCO"  
By John C. Johansen

—Courtesy Art Institute

mystery deepens our admiration grows. The marvelous book, the Bible, is crowded with mysterious statements that have excited curiosity throughout the ages. It is an Oriental work and eastern peoples have always delighted in mysteries. Not to discuss here the influence of its divine origin, there is still cause for wonder that the cold-blooded people of the North have fixed their affections upon it. Of course, this condition comes because of its divine inspiration, but also because of its mystery.

To descend from these lofty heights to commonplace earth, even to rugged stones by the sea; to three little pictures, in the recent exhibition of paintings, by Henry Golden Dearth, we are impressed with their fascinating mysteries. A very large number of gallery visitors looked askance at the little painting called "Shallow Pool," and at "Butterfly Pool," and "The Cas-

cade." Many turned away from these delightful puzzles with a shrug of the shoulders, saying: "These works are beyond us and not to be comprehended at all." But what a shame to be floored by so simple a puzzle. These pictures become not alone natural but beautiful, when seriously studied. The attitude held by these mystified critics reminds me of a certain very intelligent and well-read woman, who complained that Browning's poetry was not worth while, because of the time required to study out its meaning. This remark did not hurt Browning any, and I doubt very much if it really satisfied the student in question. Browning can hold his own, and so can Dearth's puzzle pictures take care of themselves.

These little pictures were evidently executed directly from Nature and are a puzzle because attention was paid to certain

elements in rock painting which most painters ignore. Rocks are excessively spotty. Aside from the crevices and crannies in them, and the multitude of spots caused by lichens and mosses, the confusion of local color is startling. Many of the spots are so staring that they fight the tones of sky and differ from it sometimes but little. It is difficult to make these spots keep their places, and it is hard to maintain the rotundity of the rock, they make the surfaces an incomprehensible jumble. But Dearth dodges nothing. Those who saw these pictures will recollect that one of them was called "The Cascade," a thread of water tumbling down the side of a huge ledge. The artist had to differentiate the values in this shining thread of water from the multitude of pale spots thickly strewn over the rock surface. To most people the result was merely a confusion. They could

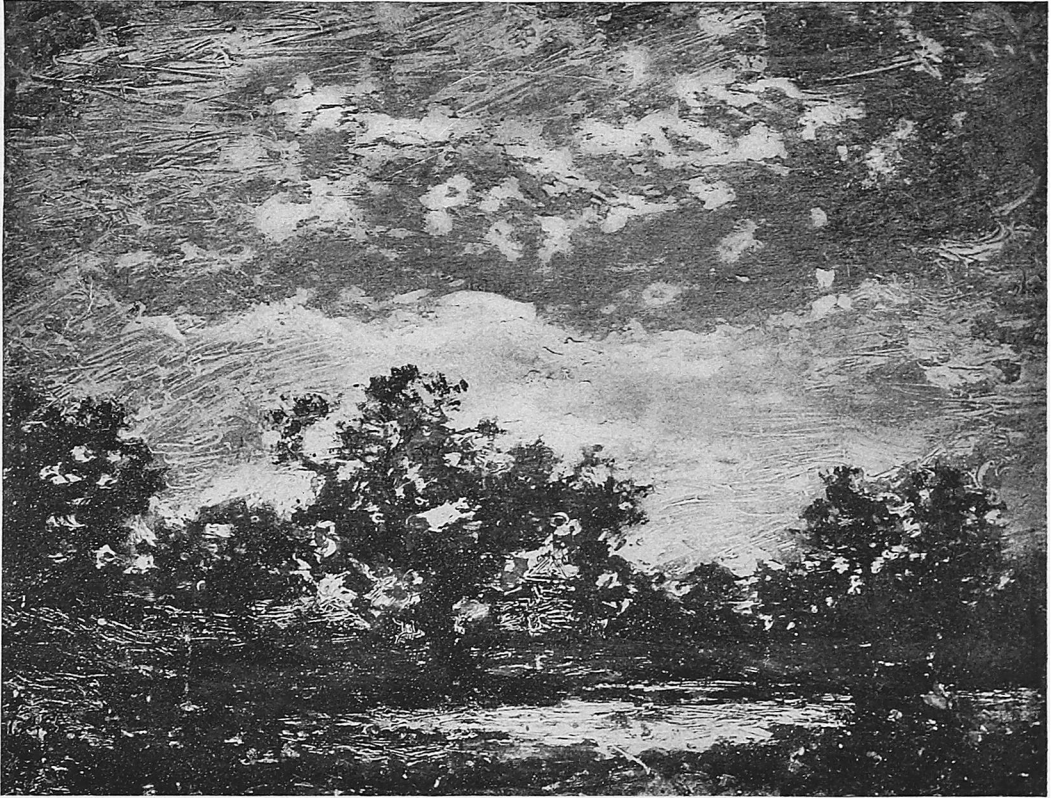
not see rotundity or the spaces between the rock surfaces, but all these items are there, to be found, not easily but surely, as a reward of patience and sincere study. When perception illuminates intelligence there is a true joy in viewing these works. Why should we flippantly dismiss a little gem of a picture, because too lazy to give attention to serious man's work? Is a picture gallery merely an amusement park where we sit passively in order to have the pleasure pumped into us? Are we to toss ridicule to artists with original ideas, because they dare paint truths that are too refined for dulled perceptions? Have we no feeling for the charm of mystery? In "The Shallow Pool," the picture lies in the foreground. Away at the top of the picture is a bit of sea, over which the wind drives white caps. Probably in our photograph these are a trifle too light which slightly interferes with



"CHURCH OF VELLIENIL"  
By Monet

—Courtesy Art Institute





"MOONLIGHT"  
By Ralph Blakelock

the flatness of the water. We are looking over a mass of rough ledge which is not easy to understand, but we may readily discover these masses of rock, and the surface of the rock, with its undulations, can be discovered even in the lying photograph. Immediately in front of these is this queerly shaped shallow pool in two parts, separated by a rough rock mass, while the immediate rock in the foreground is entirely plain. If I mistake not, anyone can penetrate the mystery of the painting and comprehend the whole thing, even though it will require thought and attention.

The painting of mysteries is a very recent development in painting, scarcely as old as the present generation. Previous to these things all pictures were plain statements. To sustain this thought we invite you to examine many hundred pictures in

which there is not a hint at mystery, excepting as the genius which created them is a mystery. It is but forty-odd years since the poetical and mysterious art of George Inness was not understood, and his pictures went a-begging, and were called bad names by the majority. The National Academy accepted these works grudgingly, when they did not turn them down altogether. Even Inness was a painter of hard facts at the commencement of his career, gradually developing his wonderful sense of mystery. The public loved materialism, and for a good reason, because they found so little else.

It so happened in 1867, that I had access to Inness' studio. I recall distinctly the day when, in Inness' absence, a well dressed man brought to his door a modest-sized picture which he set down on the

floor saying: "Tell Mr. Inness that I think this a pretty good picture, but that my friends all laugh at me because I bought such a daubed mess of confusion, that no one can understand." It is needless to say that I seriously edited this unkind message before informing the artist. Now, this work, hard and positive as it was, is cherished and paid for at high prices, while the recent and more poetical works is sold at auction at prices which Inness never dreamed of, though he was well patronized toward the end of his life. The floating fluffy suggestiveness of half-revealed grassy hillside, broken with weeds or shrubbery, the rotundities of noble trees without individual leaves, but still inviting the birds to penetrate their quivery depths, skies that have the virtues of fine color and space are carried by Inness to the glorious ultimate.

Are not the forms arranged one beyond the other, in atmospheric perspective, a delight although so deliciously obscure. Is it wrong to cherish memories of a sweet dream? Inness' best canvases are tender dreams, webs of mystery. In these days of literalism, when talented men like Miller, Friescke and Buehr paint delicious brocades and fair flesh with the best of literalism, when averted faces in shadow are curiously observed, the flesh changing color with every new effect of light, so that we can account for the usual aspect of things only by observing Nature ourselves, there is certainly mystery very near to actual poetry.

As has been said, the painting of mysterious effects in pictures—done for the sake of mystery—is a recent development. The influence of Greek sculptures has been



243

"LANDSCAPE"  
By Ranger



*"INTERIOR OF A COTTAGE"*  
By Josef Israels

—Copyright 1908 A. W. Elson Co., Boston



*"NOCTURNE-SOUTHAMPTON WATER"*  
By James A. McNeil Whistler

—Courtesy Art Institute



evident through centuries. Because of the splendid modeling of these old marbles almost all painted figures have been reduced to solid facts. Even in the earliest Renaissance, figures, as drawn, recall statuary, and the landscapes behind and around them were as absolute as the figures, even the leaves on the trees and the flowering plants and the grass were like sculpture in their positiveness. In the "Spring," the product of Botticelli, being half modern painter, half mediæval as he was, each form and figure is an isolated fact, and the same is true of Raphael's work. Almost the first example of mystery painting, for its own sake, occurs in Correggio's "Night of the Nativity." In order to produce the effect of brilliant light emanating from the body of

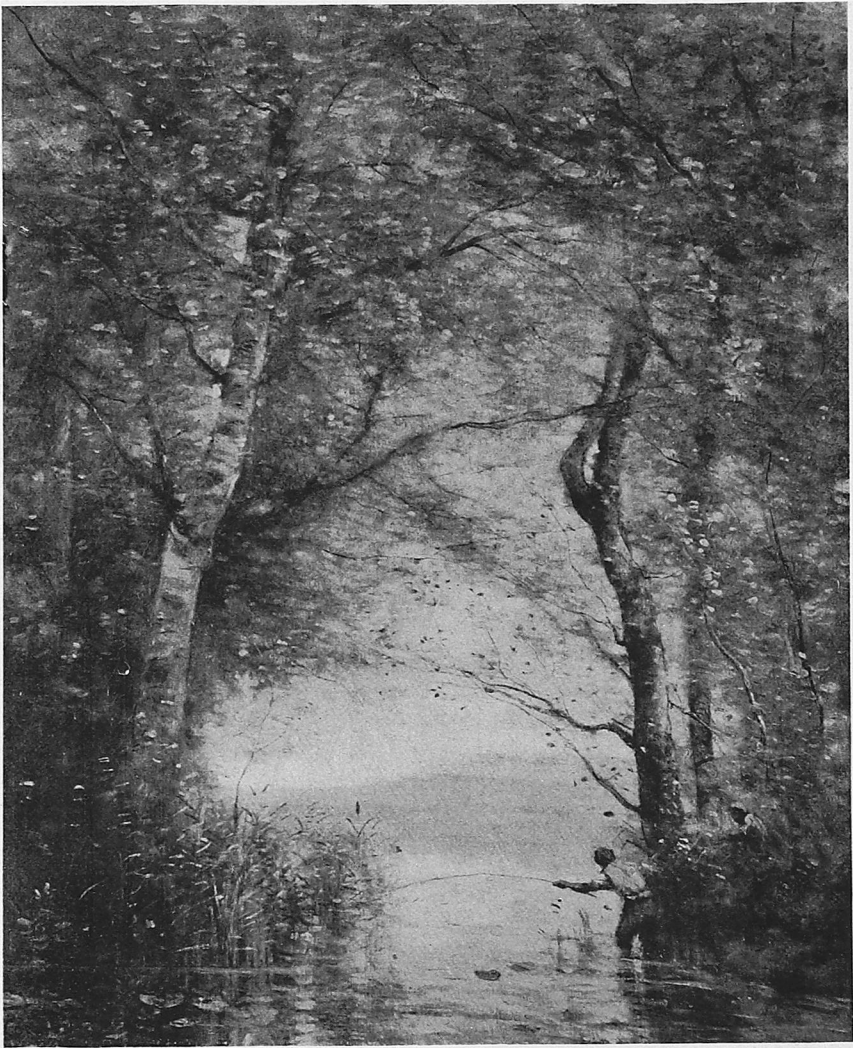
the newly born Christ, the artist entirely shrouded all the accessories of stable and cattle in mysterious tones, thus producing an artistic effect, then almost unknown in the world, and scarcely surpassed since. And for many years this had no following worthy of attention.

Perhaps it might be said that this picture, "The Night," is mysterious because it reproduces the hours of darkness, so that it had to be mysterious. Certainly, the painters of night are those most called upon to be mysterious, but there is abundant evidence of the same thing in daylight pictures. For example, the picturesque and elegant buildings along the canals of Venice are full of color and charming detail. The great church of St. Marks has had its



"NOTRE DAME DE PARIS"  
By Raffaelli

—Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago



*"THE FISHERMAN"*  
By Corot

beauty and intricacies painted with literal truth time and again. Now a young man, John C. Johansen, came out a short time ago with a series of Venetian scenes, in which he shows the buildings in full sunlight and sufficiently materialistic, but as in a dream. Johansen saw a vision and reduced his facts to poetry; and this was an astonishing departure unlike all that had gone before. This rendering in no way suggests the buildings in a fog; the artist simply dreamed that he saw these buildings as vague spirits floating in the sunshine.

Not imagining, for an instant, that his picture is literally true, it can be seen that it is sentimentally true. In fact, sunshine is itself mysterious and its real brilliancy cannot be secured unless all details are submitted to it. As one artist said to me, "If you're going to paint sunshine, you must absolutely neglect all except the sunshine." But the strange mystery of Johansen's sunlight is exquisitely beautiful.

Henry Ranger paints a landscape swimming in mystery; made so with deliberate intention, because he thought it was beauti-

ful. Very many of his landscapes are richly colored autumn scenes, a glorious effect of color, but always much subdued because garish color is likely to be too obtrusive in a mysterious picture. The American painter, Whistler, was a mystery both in his art and in his person. In his manners he effected and cultivated mystery, and we are supposed to regard this as very legitimate considering the mystery of his paintings. He appears to have painted his nocturnes simply for the sake of the poetical mystery in the treatment. "Nocturne, Southampton Water," which may always be seen at the Art Institute of Chicago, is deliciously vague, although so complete. This cannot be said to be a night picture, but only twilight. The full moon is hanging over the eastern horizon, which suggests the hour. If anyone will go very close, within a few inches, of the canvas, he will see the strange suggestiveness of the brush work in the detached ship lying at anchor. The lights on the boats and on the shore are not painted with a view to presenting their brilliancy but rather the mystery of the hour. These lights do not stare at us, or insist upon being seen, but softly glimmer in the twilight. The lights never jump outside of the frame but soothingly remain within.

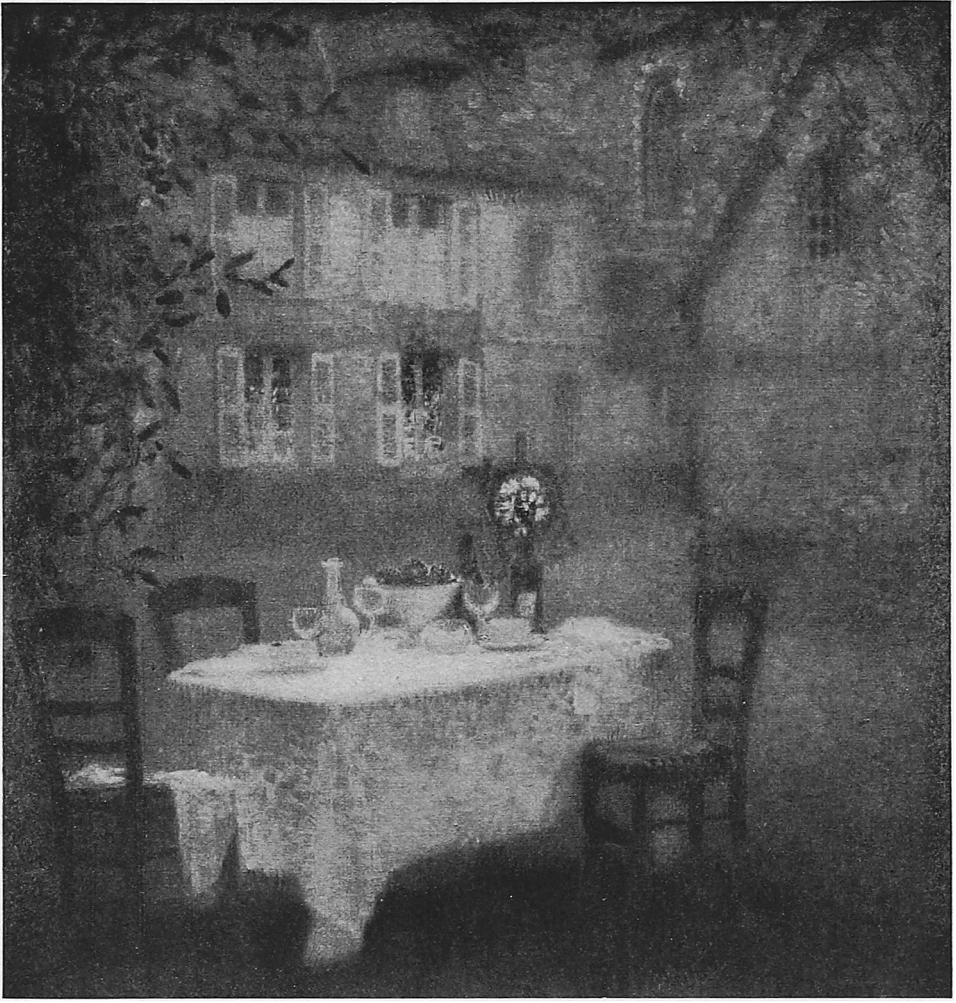
We show a reproduction of a sheep picture, by the French painter, Troyon. He certainly was usually sufficiently plain spoken; though his subdued prose sometimes came very near mystery, but in this picture the handling is very loose, and it would seem as though he maintained this condition with a special purpose, to suggest the brilliancy

of sunlight stealing in through the foliage, and that he had given up every fact, excepting the one of sunshine streaming through trees. As the light falls on his flock of sheep, he maintains the same conditions. There really is almost nothing in the picture but sunshine, and nothing dwelt on but the light. In the same way, but by a very different technique, Raffaelli, the French painter, has rendered very many scenes in the streets of Paris. We know the localities he selected and we know the substantial facts about them. Notre Dame Cathedral is an extraordinarily materialistic pile of cut stone, but Raffaelli makes it as intricate as a spider web. The leafless trees, of that open square, are just as solid as Nature could make a tree, but Raffaelli idealized these things. Though



"SHALLOW POOL"  
By Henry Golden Dearth

—Courtesy Art Institute



"LA TABLE"  
By H. E. Le Sidaner

—Courtesy of The Luxembourg, Paris

solid it is floating in atmosphere, truths hinted at, but only half-revealed, leave the imagination free play to please us with visions; even the people streaming through the square convince us that there is space, air and light, though there are so few carefully drawn forms.

This suggestive way of painting, which tells just enough to make us wish we could see more, leaves us full of fancies without obtruding facts, is wonderfully well illustrated in the painting of Claude Monet. This leader of the impressionists had to fight for recognition. His broken spots of

color say nothing plainly and, as compared with the dryness of the finished pictures, are like rich juice; though no one understood what he was trying to do, the world's eyes have been gradually opened, so that love has taken the place of contempt. Nobody abuses his work in these days. It is difficult to photograph Monet's pictures but we have a fairly good example of them here. It is cause for satisfaction that the hide-bound academicians were obliged to surrender the fight, so that they are glad to exhibit an example of Monet's work, whenever they can find a good one.

Lead by Josef Israels, the old, noble artist of Holland, almost all the contemporaneous Dutch painters seek to paint mystery. All faces in their pictures are mysterious. The old school insisted upon the details of every eye, mouth and ear: they had to be made out to the last detail. Israels produced features by means of a few well placed spots, mysteriously shrouded in the mystery of his interior. In his pictures, especially interiors, the light plays mysteriously around the tables and chairs, over the walls and floors, on heads and clothes suggesting everything and revealing nothing, all things made mysterious to aid in the effect of light. Not a single non-essential is introduced for its own sake. It is scarcely twenty years since these Dutch geniuses taught the world the value of shorthand painting for the sake of air and light. Indeed we have to thank them for their daring originality. Israels was brought up in the hard and dry manner of the French classical school, and his earlier pictures are simply French art; but his genius saved him.

The oldest painter and leader of the Barbizon school, Corot, had to fight a lifetime to gain recognition for his smoky mysteries. In composition he is classical; that is, he follows the carefully regulated composition of Claude, of the seventeenth century. But Claude's painting is positive, Corot's poetical. Claude invented an orderly landscape, Corot followed with the same shapes, but produced beautiful, mysterious poetry. No living French painter is more mysterious than Le Sidaner, the prince of poetical painters. Be the picture one of daylight or darkness, all parts are wrapped

in colorful suggestions. Our illustration shows a dinner table set in the garden of an important house. None of the recent diners are present, their existence being suggested by a single lighted window of the room to which they have retired to escape the evening's dews and damp. But the white table cloth, the dishes and decanters, softly tremble in the twilight, dimly telling of that poetical hour, the vague reminder of the day just done. The grass and foliage scarcely show green, but a ghostly gray-green very truthful to the twilight. This is one of the most lovable mysteries that I have ever seen.

The lamented Blakelock paints no more, but of all American painters, he was the one who sacrificed all facts for the sake of mystery. Our illustration recalls his manner of brushing but entirely lacks vitality because the fine coloring is absent. Probably no color process yet invented could do justice to his subtle tones.

The negro race appears to have a superior sense of sentimental treatment in painting. The most important of them, Tanner of Philadelphia and Paris, can produce both color and texture which is rarely surpassed as revealing mystery, as can be verified fairly well by studying his picture. So a good many have broken down the barriers and escaped the slavery of classicism. The whole course of art in the last three centuries takes us back to Raphael and Michael Angelo, who worshipped the Greek antiques, and brought all their art to be judged by the rigid exactness of that school, until mystery forced its way into prominence and secured a standing place.